

# Gender Role Socialization: An Intergenerational Analysis of Role Predictors

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the relationship between familial gender-role socialization and gender role attitudes. In order to assess this relationship as applicable to the lifespan, participants were chosen based on their ages and divided into two age groups: one for those aged 19-30 and another for those aged 70-94. 125 participants completed the Swedish Classical and Modern Sexism Scale (Ekehammer et al., 2000) and a new measure of gender socialization. Consistent with the study's hypotheses, age and sex were most influential in predicting sexist attitudes. Older-aged individuals reported more gendered socialization experiences and expressed more sexist attitudes than younger-aged individuals. Men were found to be more sexist than women. Additionally, the gender-role socialization factors of maternal education, maternal employment status, parental housework share, and significant other housework share were all negatively related to sexism measures. Significant other housework share also emerged as a significant predictor of sexism.

*Keywords:* gender roles; family environment; socialization, attitudes, sexism, Sweden

The 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir wrote in her most famous book, “One is not born a woman, but becomes one” (de Beauvoir, 1952, p. 1). It is with these words that she eloquently distinguishes between sex, the anatomical determinants with which one is born, and gender, the product of societal and cultural norms governing the meaning of sex.<sup>1</sup> One can be said to learn to act the part of a woman or a man through a process of gender socialization (Butler, 1996). During this process, which is characteristic of childhood and adolescence, an individual acquires attitudes about men and women—the roles they are expected to embody respectively, and the ways in which they ought to be treated. The culmination of this process is a divergence of the sexes: men are socialized to embody masculine qualities and women to embody feminine qualities. It is in this way that one adopts gender roles that encompass behaviors, cognitions, and attitudes based on what it means to be one gender relative to the other (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

The process of gender socialization begins in the context of the family (McHale et al., 2003). It is in this environment that a child is introduced to the world and to the expectations that their gender demands. It is widely held that the parents act as the principle socializing agents of a child’s gender roles (Block, 1983; Witt, 1997). The literature on the influence of parents however is riddled with differences of opinion and often contradicting theory support. The two main schools of thought that emerge most often are the identification theories and the social learning theories. Identification theories emphasize a child’s identification with its same-sex parent as the most important factor in the child’s development of gender roles (Freud, 1962). On the other hand, social learning theories

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<sup>1</sup> Although there is a distinction between “sex” and “gender,” as is indicated in the introductory paragraph, the terms will be used interchangeably throughout the text, given that a proper exploration of the terms is beyond the scope of this paper.

emphasize the role of reinforcement and modelling as the fundamentals in the acquisition of gender roles (Mischel, 1966). Parents tend to respond more favorably to their children when they display gender-appropriate behaviors, and in so doing, parents demonstrate a type of positive reinforcement that increases the likelihood of the child's repetition of the behaviors (Fagot, 1985). In this way, parents are believed to shape their children's gender-related behavior (Block, 1983). Children also learn gender roles through modelling, which involves observation and imitation of behavior (Bussey & Bandura, 1984). Children imitate models they perceive to be similar to themselves, which usually translates into imitation of a same-sex parent (Mischel, 1966). The information they receive through modelling is then incorporated into their schemata of gender (McHale et al., 2003).

A new direction in the examination of parental gender socialization emphasizes the need to move beyond the traditional paradigms that hold the limited view of the parents as the sole important familial socializing agents to a consideration of the overall structure of the family environment and family subsystems (McHale et al., 2003; Sidanius & Pena, 2003). The structure of the family environment refers to the presence or absence of male and female family influences (i.e. single-mother families versus dual-parent families). Family subsystems encompass the influences of siblings and the marital dynamic of the parents. Mchale et al. (2003) propose that a combination of approaches, including aspects of identification theories and social learning theories are necessary in determining the family's role in gender development.

Parents who are educated, mothers who are employed, and parents who display egalitarian gender role attitudes in their sharing of housework and decision-making have all been found to be determinants of egalitarian gender role attitudes in children (Starrels, 1994; Mchale et al., 2003; Kulik, 2005; Raffaelli et al., 2004; Sidanius & Pena, 2003; Jones & McBride, 1980). These socialization factors are represented by the headings: marital roles,

maternal employment, maternal education, division of housework, and sibling roles.

### **Marital Roles:**

The majority of research on parental gender socialization has focused on the parents' active direction of children's gendered behavior. However, following McHale et al's (2003) suggestion, the passive learning experience that children receive from observation of their parents' marital dynamic may be just as significant. Marital relationships can differ greatly in the distribution of power between parents and in the degree of traditionalism of the parents' gender roles. Following the modelling principle of the social learning theories, it is possible to assume that a child's experience of a non-gendered, non-traditional parental relationship could result in a less gender stereotyped child (i.e. possession of more egalitarian gender role attitudes) than a child's experience of a gendered, traditional parental relationship. To move a step further, it can be said that the more gender egalitarian the parental relationship is, represented by the nature and division of housework, childcare, employment, decision-making power, and gender role attitudes, the more gender egalitarian the children in the family will be (McHale et al., 2003). This view has gained substantial empirical backing.

One cross-cultural study that included Australian, Swedish, and American samples demonstrated that girls and boys who grew up in female-headed households tended to be more egalitarian than those who grew up in dual-parent-headed households or father-headed households, an effect attributable to evidence that women tend to be more egalitarian than men (Sidanius & Pena, 2003; Hochschild, 1989). Additionally, children who grew up in families where the mother had the most decision-making power were more egalitarian than children who grew up in gender-traditional families where the father had the most decision-

making power (Sidanius & Pena, 2003).

### **Maternal employment:**

The effect of maternal employment on children's gender schemata has been found to be highly significant (Jones & McBride, 1980). Children with employed mothers tend to hold more egalitarian, less stereotyped gender role attitudes than those with non-employed mothers (Jones & McBride, 1980; Gold & Andres, 1978). Girls whose mothers are employed outside the home are significantly more likely to display qualities of independence and assertion, and to foresee a career as an adult (Hoffman, 1977 as cited in Liao & Cai, 1995). The effect of maternal employment on boys can extend well into adulthood in determining their future housework involvement. Gupta (2006) tested the theory that men and women acquire gendered templates for housework behaviour during childhood that lay dormant until they begin to cohabit as adults. She found that boys who had mothers that worked outside the home when they were between 0-17 years old shared housework responsibilities as adults with their female partners to a much greater extent than boys whose mothers had not worked outside the home. However, this effect was limited to participants whose fathers were present during their upbringing (0-17 years) as well as for the participants who were cohabiting or married to women at the time of the study. Thus, through the experience of mothers' paid work, men can become primed as children to spend more time on housework as adults.

### **Maternal education:**

The impact of maternal education has commonly been regarded as important only insofar as it precipitated entry into the workforce. However, recent studies have demonstrated that a woman's level of education, though highly correlated with employment

level (United Nations Development Programme, 2003), exerts an independently significant effect on the gender role attitudes of men and women (Banaszak & Plutzer, 1993). The relationship between education and gender role attitudes was examined in a study conducted by Glick et al. (2002). Not only were the two variables highly related, but also education acted as the single most predictive variable of non-sexist, egalitarian gender role attitudes in men and women, accounting for large amounts of variance (Glick et al., 2002). Education has also been found to positively relate to the amount of time male partners spent doing housework (Gupta, 2006; Starrels, 1994).

### **Division of Housework:**

The division of household labor among parents can be an indication of how egalitarian/gender-typed their marital relationships are. Traditionally, women have been responsible for the majority of housework, especially that which involved cooking and cleaning. During the last few decades, men have begun to participate more frequently in household chores. Their contribution has generally been on an occasional basis and involved mainly masculine-typed chores, such as fixing the sink or taking out the trash (Calasanti & Bailey, 1991). However, as the single-earner family has largely been replaced by a dual-earner family, different ideas about the division of housework and family responsibility have emerged (Starrels, 1994). In one study that examined the division of housework among couples, it was discovered that the most influential factors relating to men's involvement in both overall and cross-gendered housework were the employment status, salary, and gender role attitudes of the men's wives (Starrels, 1994). In other words, the better employed the women were and the more egalitarian their gender role attitudes, the greater the husbands' contribution to the housework, including chores traditionally performed by women (Barnett & Baruch, 1987 as cited in Starrels, 1994). Female employment status was not only related to

husbands' increased participation in housework (Jones & McBride, 1980), but also to husbands' increased egalitarian attitudes (Starrels, 1994). The egalitarian attitudes of men and women were influential in determining men's level of participation in housework. Viewing parental models sharing household chores, and especially sharing traditionally female household chores, may be influential in determining children's ideas of what connotes gender neutral and gender-stereotyped household work (Coltrane, 1989).

### **Sibling Roles:**

Siblings represent members of the family that have the potential to exert a powerful influence over the gender development of children. Siblings can have a direct impact on one another's gender development in "serving as models, advisors, social partners, and combatants" on an everyday basis (McHale et al., 2003, p. 140). The number, age, and sex of siblings in a household can determine the types of experiences that children will likely have. One study found that school-aged children with an older sibling of the opposite sex had more egalitarian gender role attitudes (Stoneman et al., 1986). Opposite sex siblings can provide an opportunity to gain exposure to the opposite sex at an age when children may have limited or non-existent contact with opposite sex peers. In interacting with opposite sex siblings, a child is able to make social comparisons and generate ideas about gender. McHale et al. (2001) conducted a short-term longitudinal study to investigate the social learning prediction that younger siblings would be more likely to emulate the gender-related traits of their older siblings than vice versa. Sibling dyads were tested on measures of gender role attitudes, gendered personality traits, and gender-typed leisure activities. The results confirmed the social learning prediction. Additionally, the results revealed that longitudinal differences in the measures of the younger siblings' gender-role attitudes, gendered personality traits, and gender-typed leisure activities were heavily influenced by the older



siblings' scores on the same measures (as cited in McHale et al., 2003). These sibling gender connections of attitudes, personality qualities, and leisure activities were found to be even more consistent than the gender-related connections between the children and their parents (McHale et al., 2003).

Siblings may also have an indirect impact on one another's gender development by influencing the overall family structure. Whether parents will treat boys and girls differently depends, to a certain extent, on whether they are presented with the opportunity to do so, an opportunity that relies on the presence of a son and a daughter (McHale et al., 2003). Thus, gender role socialization is apt to be experienced differently for boys versus girls depending on their family structure.

### **Role of culture:**

It can be assumed that irrespective of culture, people form gender schemata, which include differentiated ideas about how men and women are supposed to act, what occupations they are supposed to hold, and what they ought to look like. The gender roles deemed appropriate for men and women can vary depending on culture. However, in every culture, with few exceptions, women are considered to be the subordinate sex and are assigned restrictive gender roles that largely diminish their power (Glick & Fiske, 1999).

Studies conducted using Swedish samples have yielded similar results to those of other western countries (Ekehammer et al., 2000), including the emphasis on female workforce participation and female education as two of the most important factors in determining egalitarian gender role attitudes (Banaszak & Plutzer, 1993; Glick et al., 2002). Also common to Sweden is the finding that women tend to be more gender egalitarian and less traditional in their attitudes than men (Ekehammer et al., 2000). Though Sweden currently ranks much higher than most western nations on the United Nations measurement

of gender empowerment (United Nations Development Programme, 2005), non-egalitarian and sexist gender role attitudes prevail (Ekehammer, 2000).

### **Role of birth cohort:**

The gender role attitudes that are learned during childhood and adolescence are particularly salient and can be resistant to change, given that they become incorporated into an individual's self concept (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). As has already been stated, the specific gender-related attitudes and values that a child experiences, are influenced by his/her family environment. However, the type of gender socialization experience provided by the family environment is shaped by societal gender norms, which in turn are subject to placement on a historical timeline (Duncan & Stewart, 2000). Depending on when one was born and to what generation one belongs, socialization experiences may differ. The types of differing experiences can run the gamut from the availability of education for men versus women to the types of economic opportunities afforded to men versus women (McHale et al., 2003). The finding that increased age is associated with increased traditional and non-egalitarian attitudes is a well-documented one (McHugh & Frieze, 1997; Kulik, 2005). Older people tend to espouse less egalitarian gender role attitudes and score higher on measures of sexism (Gallup, 1976; Glick et al., 2002). The question that has long been debated is to what this age-related difference is due. Is it a feature of aging? Is it due to life experiences? The evidence has tended to support the *Impressionable Years Hypothesis*, which attributes such age-related differences in attitudes to differences in birth cohort, as opposed to a decreased susceptibility to attitude change resulting from increased age (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989; Cutler, 1974). The *Impressionable Years Hypothesis* states that there is a sensitive socialization period in the lives of individuals during which socializing influences have the most profound impact, such that values, attitudes, and world-views acquired during this time

become fixed within individuals and are resistant to change<sup>2</sup> (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989, p. 416). The specific values, attitudes, and world-views that one is apt to be exposed to and acquire are determined in large part by the historical environment in which one experiences their early life (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989). The time period during which one comes of age can be referred to as birth cohort. Members of the same birth cohorts tend to resemble each other in their core attitudes, and members of different birth cohorts tend to differ from each other as a result of exposure to differing “economic, social, and political conditions” that have lain their influence on “socialization practices” (Cutler, 1974, p. 441 as cited in Krosnick & Alwin, 1999, p. 416). Thus, a look at familial gender socialization must be done in the context of a historical timeline.

***Birth cohort (born between 1912 and 1936):***

The socio-political environment is constantly changing. This means that every generation of people is socialized within environments unique to one another and amidst various historical events. As a result, gender role attitudes are likely to differ for individuals born into different generations. In this current study, the men and women of the older birth cohort (Age Group 2) were born in the 1920’s and 1930’s. Most of them came of age in a conservative era, before WWII provided an opportunity for women to enter into the workforce (Haavind & Magnusson, 2005). For the most part, these men and women were born into families where their fathers were responsible for working to monetarily support them, and their mothers were responsible for attending to housework and to the care of children. The experience of secondary education was mainly reserved for boys. Men were viewed as needing training in order to procure a skill that could subsequently earn them money, while women were seen as only needing exposure to the practice of being a

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<sup>2</sup> There is disagreement on when the sensitive socialization period occurs. Some researchers believe that political socialization is mostly complete by the age of 18, whereas others see it as continuing up until the age of 25 (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989).

successful wife and mother. Thus, the number of women at this time who were college-educated was extremely limited. It wasn't until the 1960's that employed women formed a conspicuous group, but even then their jobs were mostly limited to traditionally female tasks, such as nursing, secretarial work, and childcare (Fact Sheets on Sweden, 2004). This created a gender-segregation in the labor market that has been perpetuated up until this present day (Fact Sheets on Sweden, 2004). However, in the decades that followed the 1960's, women began to work in more numerous sectors, higher education for women became more attainable, and a female political presence became apparent (Haavind & Magnusson, 2005).

***Birth cohort (born between 1976 and 1987):***

Members of the younger birth cohort (Age Group 1) were born in the 1970's and 1980's after the peak of the feminist movement and the sexual revolution (Twenge, 1997). These individuals came of age in a social climate where the concept of "housewife" was almost nonexistent, and instead where an overwhelming majority of women had been gainfully employed for several decades. Statistics from the year 2003 reveal that women made up 48% of the total adult labor force in Sweden (United Nations Development Programme, 2003). The number of women who were enrolled in tertiary education, such as college or university, had also increased dramatically since past decades (93% of all women) (United Nations Development Programme, 2002). Generational changes were also evident in the number of women involved in politics. In 2004, 45.3% of the 349 members of the Swedish parliament were women, a figure that is triple of what it was just over 30 years ago in 1971 (Fact Sheets on Sweden, 2004). The effects of all these changes have been significant for both women and men. One such effect concerning men has been their increased involvement in childcare, which arose with the introduction of paid paternal childcare leave in Sweden (Fact Sheets on Sweden, 2004).

As the equality of opportunities in these areas has increased, so has the egalitarianism of individuals' gender role attitudes. An analysis of 25 years worth of attitudes toward women's rights revealed a steady increase in egalitarianism, or "liberalness," from 1970 through 1995 (Twenge, 1997).

### **Gender role attitudes and sexism:**

Examining and understanding the ways in which individuals come to adopt gender roles is important if we are to curb the pervasiveness of sexism. Gender roles and the attitudes that characterize them relate directly to levels of sexism (Viki et al., 2003). On account of socio-political changes in the Western world, it has become necessary to distinguish between the traditional form of sexism, characterized by a blatant hostility towards women, called classical sexism, and the form of sexism that is more subtle and benevolent in nature, called modern sexism (Swim et al., 1995). The distinction is not meant to deny the continuing, persistent existence of classical sexism, but merely points out the usefulness of applying a name to a form of sexism that is now more ubiquitous than its classic predecessor. Research has shown that individuals high in levels of sexism tend to support traditional gender roles (i.e. men wield power over women) and that this support is rooted in their belief that women are the weaker sex and ought to have restricted roles for their protection (Glick et al., 1996; Viki et al., 2003). The potential consequences of sexism are numerous. From a psychological standpoint, sexism can do anything from devastating the self-esteem of the target/recipient to increasing the likelihood that violence will be perpetrated against women (Matteson et al., 2005). One thing that is continually emphasized is the fact that sexism does not just impact the lives of women; it alters the relationships that men and women share, and can have serious consequences for children (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Matteson et al., 2005). Thus, a route to the understanding and alleviation of sexist attitudes

could benefit countless people, male and female alike.

### **Overview of the current study:**

The current study involved an examination of the relationship between familial gender role socialization and adult gender role attitudes. McHale et al (2003) suggested that a comprehensive examination of gender role socialization requires a look at family influences beyond just the parents. In this context our examination included inquiries about the influence of siblings and the marital relationship of the parents; specifically, how the gender role attitudes of the parents are manifested in their displays of power and responsibility within their household. Since most of the research on family gender socialization has focused exclusively on children and adolescents, this study sought to fill a need for research on the effect of early socialization experiences across the lifespan. There is a dearth of studies that have compared groups at extreme ends of the age spectrum in order to inform a lifespan perspective, and to the knowledge of the experimenter there has been no such study performed in a Swedish context. Thus, this study assessed the early gender role socialization experiences and adult gender role attitudes of Swedish individuals aged 19-94 years.

### ***Hypotheses:***

- 1) As a result of the evidence that gender role attitudes and their accompanying practices have grown more egalitarian over time (Twenge, 1997) it is anticipated that individuals born earlier, between 1912 and 1936 (Age group 2) will report more traditional and gendered familial gender-role socialization experiences than individuals born later, between 1976 and 1987 (Age Group 1).

- 2) a. Since early familial socialization experiences that are egalitarian (i.e. higher degrees of maternal and paternal education, greater sharing of household tasks and decision-making power, greater maternal employment status, less stereotyped parental gender role attitudes, etc.) are associated with less sexist gender role attitudes, it is hypothesized that the greater the traditional and gendered socialization experiences reported, the higher the levels of sexism in gender role attitudes will be.
- b. Furthermore, it is expected that individuals aged 70-94 years (Age group 2) will score higher on a measure of gender role egalitarianism/sexist attitudes, indicating higher degrees of sexism, than individuals aged 19-30 years (Age group 1).
- 3) Given evidence that men tend to be more sexist than women (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Ekehammer et al., 2000) it is anticipated that men will score higher than women on a measure of gender role egalitarianism/sexist attitudes, indicating higher degrees of sexism.

In order to examine the hypotheses, participants were split into two age groups: one for individuals between 19 and 30 years old (Age Group 1) and another for individuals between 70 and 94 years old (Age Group 2). The factors used to explore familial gender role socialization experiences served as the independent variables of the study. These variables included questions about the degree of egalitarianism involved in familial gender role socialization, including maternal and paternal educational levels, traditionalism of maternal employment, the degree to which parents shared housework responsibilities, the extent to which parents held decision-making power, the degree to which respondent

shares(d) housework responsibilities with a cohabiting partner, and questions dealing with whether the mother and father worked outside the home for the entire period when the respondent was between 0 and 17 years of age.

The dependent variable in this study was the level of egalitarianism in gender role attitudes, or sexism.

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between familial gender role socialization and gender role attitudes.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants:**

One hundred twenty-five individuals took part in this study. Age group 1 was composed of 89 students between the ages of 19 and 30 (median age 22 years), of whom 42 were male and 47 were female. The participants were enrolled at Växjö University and represented a relatively even split among the academic areas of political science, mathematics, and psychology.

Age Group 2 was composed of 36 individuals between the ages of 70 and 94 (median age 77), of whom 15 were male and 21 were female. The participants included residents of an elder home in Växjö, members of a Swedish church in Ramkvilla, and members of a pensioners club in Växjö. Selection of participants was based on age, willingness to participate, and mental awareness.

### **Measures:**



The participants received questionnaire packets consisting of a demographics sheet, a socialization questionnaire, and the Swedish classical and modern sexism scale, in that exact order. The socialization and sexism sections both included written instructions about how to respond to the questions (i.e. whether to choose a response based on a Likert scale or to fill in a response). Given that sexism can be a loaded phenomenon, the sexism measures were included last in the questionnaire packet, so that the subjects would not become distracted by or be primed for them, which would subsequently affect their responses to the socialization questions. Additionally, questions were presented in such a way that the movement was from general to more specific, so as to ease subjects into the question and answer process.

***Constructing a gender role socialization questionnaire:***

As a result of the non-existence of any scales that measure adults' recollections of childhood and adolescent gender role socialization, the experimenter constructed a series of questions in this area. Items pertaining to the socialization factors that have been found to influence gender role attitudes, such as maternal employment, were constructed. Participants were asked to think back to the period in time when they were between 0 and 17 years old in order to successfully complete the questionnaire, with the exception of one question dealing with their most significant romantic adult relationship. There was a total of 20 items, excluding the question subsections, of which there were 4. The items were in question form and participants were instructed to mark one response out of a possible 2 or more responses where relevant. Where multiple-choice responses were not available, there were instead blank lines in which participants were expected to write their answer(s). Where questions dealt with childhood and adolescent socialization, the specific age range to which they were asked to base their responses (0-17 years) was indicated. The aim of the questionnaire items was to

assess the degree to which one's family environment was gender egalitarian and non-traditional in its gender-role socialization. In an effort to get at this the scale asked questions about parental employment, education, gender role attitudes, decision-making power, and division of housework. The scale also included questions about siblings, sex-differentiation in the household, type of chore responsibility during adolescence, and where relevant, current division of housework with significant other.

Sample questions and answers included:

(1) Who had the most decision-making power in your household?

(a) mother/mother figure, (b) father/father figure, (c) shared, (d) other

(2) Did your parents share housework responsibilities?

(a) not at all, (b) to some extent, (c) to a great extent

The questionnaire was translated from English to Swedish, then back-translated into English in order to test the translation's validity. The scale's internal consistency reliability as measured by Cronbach alpha was satisfactory at 0.67. See Appendix A for full scale.

### ***Swedish classical and modern sexism scales:***

Adult gender role attitudes were measured using the Swedish classical and modern sexism scales. The scales are presented in one measure, but reflect the distinction between the traditional form of sexism (classical) and the newer, subtler form of sexism (modern). High scores on each of these subscales represent classically sexist and modern sexist attitudes. This measure was constructed specifically to measure attitudes within a Swedish context (Ekehammer, 2000). Scale items are presented as statements to which participants may respond on a 5-point Likert scale: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Somewhat disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Somewhat agree, and (5) Strongly agree. There are seven items that

measure classical sexism and eight items that measure modern sexism. Of these fifteen items, six are reverse-coded. Additionally, items measuring modern sexism are divided into three subsections: denial of continuing discrimination, antagonism toward demands, and resentment about special favors. Sample items for the classical sexism scale include: (a) I prefer a male boss to a female boss, (b) Women are generally not very talented, and (c) A man's work is more important than a woman's. Sample items for the modern sexism scale include: (a) Society treats men and women the same way, (b) The women's movement serves no purpose and should be abolished, and (c) The government puts too much emphasis on women's issues.

This measure was translated from English to Swedish, and then back-translated from Swedish to English to test the validity of the translation.

The scale's Cronbach alpha levels were 0.73 for the classical sexism section and 0.80 for the modern sexism section (Ekehammer et al., 2000).

## **Procedure:**

### *Pilot:*

A small pilot study was conducted prior to the beginning of the current study to assure participant comprehension of the scale items. The piloting was in no sense thorough on account of the study's time constraint, and the additional need to employ the services of a translator in order to discuss the questionnaires. As a result, the questionnaire packet was only piloted on 2 individuals: one individual from Age group 1 (19-30) and one from Age group 2 (70-94). The subjects were timed in completing the questionnaires, and based on their suggestions and the time it took for them to complete the questionnaires, several items were eliminated so as to rid the questionnaires of confusion areas and to shorten their length.

The resulting questionnaires took approximately 10 minutes on average for participants to complete.

*Recruitment:*

**Age Group 1:**

Recruitment of participants for Age Group 1 took place in Växjö University lectures with prior permission from professors. The experimenter introduced herself in English as a psychology student at Växjö University. She explained that for her D-thesis she was interested in exploring the relationship between early socialization experiences and gender role attitudes, and that part of her investigation involved questionnaires. She told them that each questionnaire packet took about 10 minutes to complete, and that their help would be appreciated, but that their participation was entirely voluntary. In the case that they chose to participate they were told that in order to ensure anonymity they should not write their names on the questionnaires. They were assured that their questionnaires would be handled in a confidential manner.

**Age Group 2:**

Recruitment of participants for Age Group 2 varied according to location. Ultimately though, all participants were contacted through an intermediary person; in most cases a staff member of their living facility, in another case a church worker, and in another a family member. The experimenter met with the person who would be distributing the questionnaires to the participants to discuss the logistics of the study and the appropriateness

of the questionnaires. The intermediary individuals agreed to distribute the questionnaires to people who met the age, interest, and awareness criteria, and to convey to the would-be participants the agreement of confidentiality. Questionnaires were subsequently picked up by the experimenter or sent to the experimenter via mail.

### **Results:**

All data was analyzed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and was found to be normally distributed. All data analysis was performed using SPSS v.12. During preliminary data analysis, 12 out of 20 of the items on the socialization questionnaire were found to either be inconclusive or lacking in variability, and were thus not included in the final analysis. Ten items were treated as independent variables in the final analysis. Of those ten, two served as moderator variables: age group and sex. Family-related socialization was represented by 8 items: maternal educational attainment, paternal educational attainment, degree of father's work outside the home, characterization of mother's employment (professional, non-professional, housewife), degree of mother's work outside the home, parental decision-making, degree of parental housework share, and degree of participant's housework share within most significant cohabiting romantic relationship. The dependent variable was sexism as represented by scores on the Swedish classical and modern sexism scale.

#### ***Age group differences in socialization experiences***

In order to assess the degree of difference in the reported gender-role socialization experiences between members of Age Group 1 (19-30 years) and Age Group 2 (70-94 years), an Independent Samples t-test was employed. The analysis revealed significant differences on 6 out of 8 socialization variables. Most notable were the differences in

maternal education ( $t = 8.342$ ,  $df = 63.32$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed), maternal employment status ( $t = -8.474$ ,  $df = 113$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed), and degree to which parents shared housework ( $t = 5.491$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed) followed by extent to which respondent shared housework with significant other ( $t = 4.116$ ,  $df = 73.46$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed), paternal education ( $t = 3.757$ ,  $df = 121$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed), and degree of mother's work outside the home ( $t = -3.365$ ,  $df = 82.55$ ,  $p < .005$ ). The two variables that did not yield substantial group differences were the degree of father's work outside the home, and parental decision-making power within household. The majority of respondents in both groups indicated that their fathers worked outside the home for the entirety of their childhood and adolescence (0-17 years old), and that both parents were equally involved in household decisions. See Table 1 below and continued on following page.

**Table 1. Age Differences in Gender Role Socialization Experiences**

AgeGr	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EduFa 19-30 years old	88	2,5682	1,18220	,12602
70-94 years old	35	1,6857	1,15737	,19563
EduMo 19-30 years old	89	3,1011	1,04495	,11076
70-94 years old	33	1,4545	,93845	,16336
WkFa 19-30 years old	89	1,1685	,37647	,03991
70-94 years old	35	1,3429	,48159	,08140
ProfMo 19-30 years old	81	1,7407	,51908	,05768
70-94 years old	34	2,6765	,58881	,10098
WkMo 19-30 years old	88	1,5795	,49646	,05292
70-94 years old	34	1,8529	,35949	,06165
Dec 19-30 years old	89	2,4382	,85220	,09033
70-94 years old	36	2,5278	,77408	,12901
PHswrk 19-30 years old	85	2,0353	,69774	,07568
70-94 years old	35	1,3143	,52979	,08955
Hswrk 19-30 years old	72	2,5417	,69073	,08140
70-94 years old	34	2,0000	,60302	,10342

**Note:** **EduFa**=paternal education, **EduMo**=maternal education, **WkFa**=father's work years, **ProfMo**=maternal employment status, **WkMo**=mother's work years, **Dec**=parental decision-making, **PHswrk**=parental housework share, **Hswrk**=significant other housework share

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
EduFa	Equal variances assumed	,852	,358	3,757	121	,000	,88247	,23486	,41749	1,34744
	Equal variances not assumed			3,792	63,781	,000	,88247	,23271	,41755	1,34739
EdMo	Equal variances assumed	5,788	,018	7,939	120	,000	1,64658	,20741	1,23593	2,05723
	Equal variances not assumed			8,342	63,319	,000	1,64658	,19737	1,25220	2,04096
WkFa	Equal variances assumed	14,206	,000	-2,139	122	,034	-,17432	,08150	-,33566	-,01298
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,923	51,163	,060	-,17432	,09066	-,35631	,00767
ProfMo	Equal variances assumed	,379	,540	-8,474	113	,000	-,93573	,11042	-1,15450	-,71696
	Equal variances not assumed			-8,046	55,601	,000	-,93573	,11629	-1,16873	-,70273
WkMo	Equal variances assumed	61,693	,000	-2,925	120	,004	-,27340	,09346	-,45845	-,08834
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,365	82,550	,001	-,27340	,08125	-,43501	-,11178
Dec	Equal variances assumed	1,647	,202	-,546	123	,586	-,08958	,16408	-,41437	,23522
	Equal variances not assumed			-,569	70,948	,571	-,08958	,15750	-,40362	,22447
PHswrk	Equal variances assumed	,335	,564	5,491	118	,000	,72101	,13130	,46099	,98103
	Equal variances not assumed			6,150	82,812	,000	,72101	,11725	,48780	,95421
Hswrk	Equal variances assumed	9,123	,003	3,919	104	,000	,54167	,13820	,26760	,81573
	Equal variances not assumed			4,116	73,455	,000	,54167	,13161	,27939	,80394

**Correlations**

Pearson correlations were conducted in order to establish the relationships between and among the variables representing gender role socialization and those representing sexism (scores from the sexism scale and its classical and modern sexism components). Pearson's bivariate correlations yielding significance are presented in Table 2. The majority of correlations were moderate with the exception of high correlations between the sexism scale and its classical and modern sexism components. Age group shared positive relationships with the total sexism scale ( $r = 0.347, p < .01$ ), and its subsections: classical sexism ( $r = 0.297, p < .01$ ) and modern sexism ( $r = 0.317, p < .01$ ).

Table 2. Significant Variable Correlations

	<u>EduFa</u>	<u>EduMo</u>	<u>WkFa</u>	<u>ProfMo</u>	<u>WkMo</u>	<u>PHswkr</u>	<u>Hswkr</u>	<u>SexScr</u>	<u>CISScr</u>	<u>MSScr</u>
<u>AgeGr</u>	-.323**	-.587**	.190*	.623**	.258**	-.451**	-.359**	.347**	.297*	.317**
<u>Sex</u>								-.357**	-.375**	-.257**
<u>EduFa</u>		.482**		-.309**		.286**	.232*			
<u>EduMo</u>				-.608**	-.292**	.397**	.261**	-.221*	-.211*	-.200*
<u>WkFa</u>					.247**					
<u>ProfMo</u>					.398**	-.386**	-.321**	.352**	.281**	.337**
<u>PHswkr</u>								-.318**	-.226*	-.307**
<u>Hswkr</u>								-.448**	-.396**	-.368**

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Note:** **EduFa**=paternal education, **EduMo**=maternal education, **WkFa**=father's work years, **ProfMo**=maternal employment status, **WkMo**=mother's work years, **Dec**=parental decision-making, **PHswkr**=parental housework share, **Hswkr**=significant other housework share, **SexScr**=total sexism scale with classical and modern sexism scales combined, **CISScr**=classical sexism scale, **MSScr**=modern sexism scale,

Of the gender role socialization variables, four out of eight were moderately correlated with total sexism, including maternal education ( $r = -.221, p < .05$ ), maternal employment status ( $r = 0.352, p < .01$ ), parental housework share ( $r = -.318, p < .01$ ), and significant other housework share ( $r = -.448, p < .01$ ). Bivariate correlations between gender role socialization variables and sexism variables revealed that the more education one's mother had, the less traditional her profession, the more one's parents shared housework responsibilities, and the more one had shared their own housework responsibilities with a significant partner, the less sexist the respondent tended to be.

### Age Group Differences in Gender Role Attitudes

In order to determine whether age significantly contributed to differences in sexism scores, an Independent Samples t-test was performed. The results of the t-test revealed a significant difference between age groups on the Swedish Classical and Modern Sexism scale ( $t = -4.65, df = 91.49, p < .001$ , two-tailed). Age group 2 scored significantly higher ( $M=40.51; SD=6.25$ ) than age group 1 ( $M=33.77; SD=9.17$ ). The effect size was large ( $d = .88$ ). Significant differences between age groups were also obtained on the individual



scale subsections, classical sexism ( $t = -3.44$ ,  $df = 122$ ,  $p < .005$ , two-tailed) and modern sexism ( $t = -4.363$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed). The effect sizes were .71 for classical and .81 for modern respectively. Figures 1a, 1b, and 1c display the results numerically and graphically.

**Note.** The greater the score on the modern and classical sexism scales, the more sexist the attitudes.

Figure 1a.

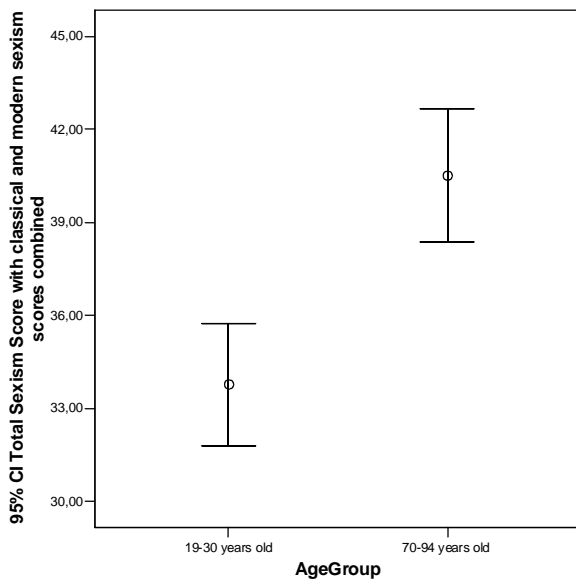


Figure 1b.

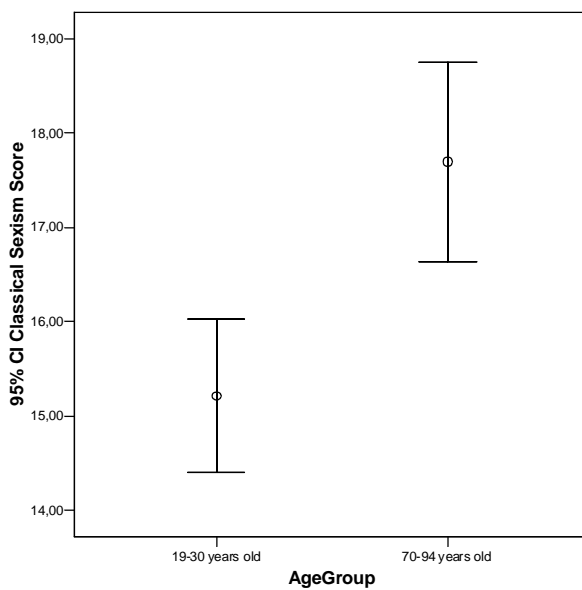
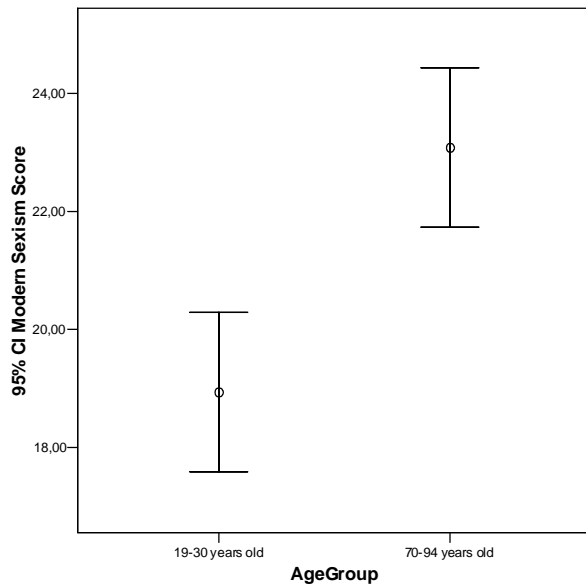


Figure 1c.



### Gender differences in gender-role attitudes

In order to test the hypothesis that men would score higher on measures of sexism than women in both age groups, an Independent samples t-test was performed. Significant differences between the sexes emerged on the Swedish Classical and Modern Sexism Scale ( $t = 4.130$ ,  $df = 117$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed) and on the classical sexism ( $t = 4.471$ ,  $df = 122$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed) and modern sexism ( $t = 2.889$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p < .005$ , two-tailed) scale subsections, with men scoring significantly higher than women. The effect sizes were ( $d = .76$ ) for the Swedish Classical and Modern Sexism Scale, ( $d = .81$ ) for the classical sexism scale component and ( $d = .53$ ) for the modern sexism scale component. See Table 4 on following page for t-test results.

**Table 4. Sex Differences in Scores on Sexism Scales**

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Sexism Score with classical and modern sexism scores combined	male	54	39,2222	9,28108	1,26299
	female	65	32,8769	7,47811	,92755
Classical Sexism Score	male	56	17,5000	3,71728	,49674
	female	68	14,6471	3,38021	,40991
Modern Sexism Score	male	54	21,8333	6,33573	,86218
	female	66	18,7576	5,32934	,65600

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
SexScr	Equal variances assumed	2,113	,149	4,130	117	,000	6,34530	1,53623	3,30288	9,38771
	Equal variances not assumed			4,049	101,208	,000	6,34530	1,56700	3,23687	9,45373
CISScr	Equal variances assumed	,612	,435	4,471	122	,000	2,85294	,63811	1,58975	4,11614
	Equal variances not assumed			4,430	112,562	,000	2,85294	,64403	1,57694	4,12894
MSScr	Equal variances assumed	1,216	,272	2,889	118	,005	3,07576	1,06481	,96713	5,18438
	Equal variances not assumed			2,839	103,769	,005	3,07576	1,08337	,92734	5,22418

**Note.** The greater the score on the modern and classical sexism scales, the more sexist the attitudes

**Effects of socialization variables on sexism**

A multiple regression analysis was conducted for the Swedish Classical and Modern Sexism scale to assess the amount of variance in sexist attitudes that could be explained by a model of socialization factors. Using the stepwise method, significant other housework share was entered first (step 1). Next, participant sex was entered (step 2). Age group was entered in the third and final step (step 3). In step 1, significant other housework share accounted for significant amounts of variance ( $\phi R^2=.178$ ) and significantly predicted sexism ( $t = -4.335, p < .001, \beta = -.43$ ). In step 2, participant sex added significant incremental validity with the total variance accounted for rising to 25.3% ( $\phi R^2=.253$ ). Participant sex was found to be a significant predictor of sexism ( $t = -.3023, p < .005, \beta = -.29$ ). Finally, in step 3, age group added significant incremental validity to the model with a total of 33.1% of variance accounted for ( $\phi R^2=.331$ ) and significantly predicted sexism ( $t = -3.215, p < .005, \beta$

= .33). The final prediction model explains 33.1% of the variance in sexism scale scores ( $F(3, 82) = 14.546, p < .001$ ). Table 5 provides information for the predictor variables that are included in the model. Maternal and paternal educational levels, maternal employment status, maternal and paternal length of work outside the home, parental housework share, and parental decision-making power were excluded from the Stepwise analysis as they did not significantly strengthen the model.

Table 5.

**Table 5. Predicting sexist gender role attitudes by background variables and socialization factors**

N=83	B	$\beta$	SEB
Step 1			
Housework	-5.28	-.43***	1.22
Step 1 Statistics:	$\phi R^2=.178$	F=18.80***	
Step 2			
Housework	-4.746	-.39***	1.18
Sex	-4.97	-.29**	1.64
Step 2 Statistics:	$\phi R^2=.253$	F=14.91***	
Step 3			
Housework	-2.96	-.24*	1.24
Sex	-5.55	-.33**	1.57
Age Group	5.85	.33**	1.82
Step 3 Statistics:	$\phi R^2=.33$	F=14.55***	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note:** "Housework" represents significant other housework share.

Separate regression analyses were performed for male and female participants.

Using the Enter method, they revealed that the prediction model held greater predictive power for women ( $F(9, 37) = 2.332, p < .05, \phi R^2 = .207$ ) than for men ( $F(9, 26) = 1.437, p < .25, \phi R^2 = .101$ ). There were no statistically significant predictors of sexist attitudes for male participants, but the variable that was the most predictive as reflected by its Beta value was maternal education ( $\beta = -.45$ ). In the prediction model for female participants, age group was the most predictive variable of sexism ( $\beta = .45$ ). See Tables 6 and 7 for full regression results.

Table 6.

**Table 6. Predicting sexist gender role attitudes by background variables and socialization factors in male participants**

<b>N=36</b>	<b>B</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>SEB</b>	<b>p</b>
WkFa	3.32	.16	4.64	.481
ProfMo	.56	.05	4.01	.891
WkMo	-1.87	-.11	3.48	.596
Dec	-.34	-.03	2.06	.870
PHswrk	-.81	-.06	2.72	.768
Hswkr	-2.34	-.21	2.26	.309
EduFa	.22	.04	1.25	.863
EduMo	-3.015	-.45	2.06	.155
AgeGr	-1.18	-.06	4.40	.790
Model Statistics:	$\phi R^2 = .10$	$F = 1.44$		

*Note:* **EduFa**=paternal education, **EduMo**=maternal education, **WkFa**=father's work years, **ProfMo**=maternal employment status, **WkMo**=mother's work years, **Dec**=parental decision-making, **PHswrk**=parental housework share, **Hswkr**=significant other housework share

Table 7.

**Table 7. Predicting sexist gender role attitudes by background variables and socialization factors in female participants**

N=47	B	$\beta$	SEB	p
WkFa	.92	.06	2.26	.688
ProfMo	.42	.04	1.92	.830
WkMo	.80	.05	2.69	.767
Dec	1.01	.12	1.29	.441
PHswrk	-.21	-.02	1.90	.914
Hswkr	-2.81	-.23	2.22	.213
EduFa	-.38	-.06	1.04	.72
EduMo	.80	.14	1.21	.512
AgeGr	6.98	.45	3.71	.068
Model Statistics:	$\phi R^2 = .21$		F=2.33	

*Note:* **EduFa**=paternal education, **EduMo**=maternal education, **WkFa**=father's work years, **ProfMo**=maternal employment status, **WkMo**=mother's work years, **Dec**=parental decision-making, **PHswrk**=parental housework share, **Hswkr**=significant other housework share

Separate regression analyses were also performed for age groups 1 and 2. Using the Enter method, the predictive power of the model for each group was shown to be significantly different (Age group 1:  $F(9, 46) = 2.265, p < .05, \phi R^2 = .171$  Age group 2:  $F(9, 17) = 1.730, p < .5, \phi R^2 = .202$ ), and the effect of the model on sex in Age Group 1 was significant ( $t = -2.853, p < .05, \text{Beta} = -.39$ ) in comparison to Age Group 2 ( $t = -1.907, p < .1, \text{Beta} = -.41$ ). The variables with the most predictive power in Age Group 2 were maternal length of work outside the home ( $t = 2.020, p < .06, \beta = 1.02$ ) and significant other share of housework ( $t = -2.334, p < .05, \beta = -.48$ ). Refer to Tables 8 and 9 on following page for regression results.

Table 8.

**Table 8. Predicting sexist gender role attitudes by background variables and socialization factors in individuals aged 19-30 years (Age Group 1)**

<b>N=56</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>β</b>	<b>SEB</b>	<b>p</b>
WkFa	5.08	.26	2.87	.084
ProfMo	1.57	.10	2.22	.484
WkMo	-1.92	-.12	2.29	.407
Dec	.45	.05	1.38	.747
PHswrk	.31	.03	1.87	.867
Hswkr	-1.61	-.13	1.72	.353
EduFa	-.34	-.05	.97	.731
EduMo	-1.80	-.223	1.29	.168
Sex	-6.52	-.40	2.29	.007
Model Statistics:	φR2=.17		F=2.27	

*Note:* **EduFa**=paternal education, **EduMo**=maternal education, **WkFa**=father's work years, **ProfMo**=maternal employment status, **WkMo**=mother's work years, **Dec**=parental decision-making, **PHswrk**=parental housework share, **Hswkr**=significant other housework share

Table 9.

**Table 9. Predicting sexist gender role attitudes by background variables and socialization factors in individuals aged 70-94 years (Age Group 2)**

<b>N=28</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>β</b>	<b>SEB</b>	<b>p</b>
WkFa	-.51	-.04	3.22	.877
ProfMo	-5.80	-.53	4.77	.241
WkMo	18.80	1.02	9.31	.059
Dec	2.56	.32	2.24	.268
PHswrk	.66	.05	2.87	.821
Hswkr	-5.50	-.48	2.36	.032
EduFa	.03	.01	1.38	.983
EduMo	3.88	.59	2.52	.141
Sex	-5.50	-.41	2.89	.074
Model Statistics:	φR2= .20		F=1.73	

*Note:* **EduFa**=paternal education, **EduMo**=maternal education, **WkFa**=father's work years, **ProfMo**=maternal employment status, **WkMo**=mother's work years, **Dec**=parental decision-making, **PHswrk**=parental housework share, **Hswkr**=significant other housework share

## **Discussion:**

Past research has suggested that the basis for adult gender role attitudes is formed early on in life, and that one's family environment assists in providing the experiences that work to create and shape those attitudes. The adherence to traditional gender roles within a family, such as a father who acts as the sole bread winner, or a mother who is solely responsible for the housework, can socialize stereotyped ideas about gender in children and adolescents that can eventually lead to the development of sexist gender role attitudes. The degree of stereotype involved in gender-role socialization and the content of the stereotypes is ever-changing, and most research confirms that individuals today tend to be substantially more egalitarian in their attitudes toward gender roles than their historical counterparts. Indeed, age is consistently associated with more traditional and sexist attitudes toward gender roles (Glick et al., 2002).

This study attempted to highlight the relationship between familial gender-role socialization and adult gender role attitudes through the use of two very different birth cohorts. The purpose was to see whether one's adult gender role attitudes were determined by familial gender-related experiences, and if this particular relationship applied to individuals across the lifespan. For these analyses, a scale was created to measure factors related to gender-role socialization. Given the scale's satisfactory internal reliability, confidence was placed in its ability to capture the familial gender-related factors of interest.

Three hypotheses were tested:

**H1:** Individuals aged 70-94 (Age group 2) will report more traditional familial gender-role socialization experiences than individuals aged 19-30 (Age Group 1).

**H2: a.** The greater the traditionality of socialization experiences reported, the higher the levels of sexism in gender role attitudes will be.



**b.** In light of H1 and H2a, individuals aged 70-94 years (Age group 2) will score higher on a measure of gender role egalitarianism/sexism, indicating higher degrees of sexism, than individuals aged 19-30 years (Age group 1).

**H3:** In both age groups, men will score higher on measures of gender role egalitarianism/sexism, indicating higher degrees of sexism than women.

On the whole, the findings support the research hypotheses. As expected, members of Age Group 2 reported more traditional gender-role socialization experiences, including significantly lower levels of education for their fathers and mothers, and lower degrees of housework-sharing for their parents and in their own cohabiting relationships (confirming H1). All but two respondents from Age Group 2 reported having had mothers who did not work outside the home at all during their childhood and adolescence. In contrast, a majority of the members of Age Group 1 reported having had mothers who worked outside the home at least part-time during their childhoods and adolescence. In Age Group 2, all participants reported that in the relationship between their parents and in their own most significant romantic relationship, the housework had either not been shared at all or had been shared to some extent. In contrast, a small minority of participants from Age Group 1 reported no housework sharing in their parents' relationships and in their own relationships. The majority of Age Group 1 participants reported that housework had been shared to some extent or to a great extent. This difference in socialization experiences was anticipated given the great differences in the socio-political environments in which the members of each age group grew up.

Two gender-role socialization factors, the degree of father's work outside the home and parental decision-making power, did not yield notable group differences. It was anticipated that participants from Age Group 1 would report that their fathers worked outside

the home less, given the availability of paternal leave to their fathers, which was not in existence at the time that the members of Age Group 2 came of age, and thus was not available to their fathers. One explanation for the missed finding could be the study's small sample size. An examination of the raw study data shows a difference between the two groups on this factor. Within Age Group 1, there were several reports of fathers who took paternal leave and were at home with their kids for varying amounts of time. Within Age Group 2, there were no such reports. It is possible that a larger sample size would have revealed this subtle difference statistically.

It was also anticipated that participants from Age Group 1 would report greater amounts of shared parental decision-making power than those from Age Group 2. Findings have indicated that the greater the influence of men in a household, as reflected by decision-making authority, the greater the children's level of anti-egalitarianism (Sidanius & Pena, 2003). Given that younger individuals tend to come from less gender-traditional family structures and tend to exhibit higher levels of egalitarianism in their beliefs, the expectation was that younger individuals (Age Group 1) would report lower levels of paternal influence in household decision-making than older individuals (Age Group 2). This finding was most likely not confirmed because of the limitation of the socialization questionnaire. Only one question dealt with decision-making power and the factor was not clearly defined. Decision-making power is a broadly defined concept, which should have been broken down further so as to be understandable to the participants. An additional limitation was the small size of the sample.

In order to test H2a, the associations between the gender-role socialization variables and the sexism variables were assessed using Pearson's correlations. The hypothesis was partially supported by moderately significant correlations between sexism and four out of eight socialization variables. Specifically, higher maternal educational attainment, higher

maternal employment status, higher degrees of parental housework share, and higher degrees of significant other housework share were all associated with having less sexist attitudes. These findings are consistent with the research on maternal education and employment, which suggest that the children of educated and employed mothers tend to have more egalitarian gender role attitudes (Jones & McBride, 1980; Banaszak et al., 1993), and on the research findings that male children of employed mothers are more likely to share housework with significant others as adults (Gupta, 2006).

With regard to the background and socialization variables, the three that contributed most in predicting sexist gender role attitudes were the extent to which the respondent shared housework with a significant other, the sex of the participant, and the age group to which the respondent belonged. Thus, being young, female, and having shared housework to a great extent with a significant other were all predictive of lower levels of sexism (partially confirming H2a and confirming H3). The fact that the share of housework with a significant other was found to be such a strong predictor of sexist attitudes was somewhat surprising. Significant other housework share accounted for almost 18% of the variance in sexism before age group and sex were added. The addition of participant sex increased the variance accounted for by a little over 7%, and the addition of age group increased it by roughly 8%. Although 7 of the other socialization variables were not found to predict sexist attitudes, 3 of them, including paternal education, maternal education, and maternal employment status were associated with significant other housework share. That is to say that these variables could play a part in determining an individual's degree of significant other housework share, which in turn played a part in determining sexism in this study. This could explain the unexpected predictive power of significant other housework share. In previous studies, higher paternal and maternal educational levels and maternal

employment have been strongly linked to an increased degree of significant other housework share (Gupta, 2006; Starrels, 1994).

Additional tests showed significant differences between the age groups and the sexes on measures of sexism, indicating that men in both age groups tended to be more sexist than women, and older respondents tended to be more sexist than younger (confirming H2b and H3). The finding that women tend to have more egalitarian gender role attitudes is common and has been encountered at every stage of life (Kulik, 2005). Of the socialization factors, maternal education was found to be most influential in predicting sexist attitudes in men, while age group was most influential in this regard for women. Similarly, the association between age and higher levels of traditional and sexist gender role attitudes is a well-documented one (Glick et al., 2002). The most feasible explanation based on prior research and this study's findings is that it is not age in and of itself that predicts higher levels of sexism, but the socialization experiences that are encompassed by the specific age group, a view referred to as the Impressionable Years Hypothesis (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989).

Members of Age Group 2 reported low levels of significant housework sharing, parental education, maternal education, and maternal employment status. In addition to the strong relationships between significant other housework sharing and parental education, significant other housework sharing and maternal employment status, significant other housework sharing also has a strong relationship with non-sexist gender role attitudes (Gupta, 2006). Thus, it is not surprising that members of Age Group 2 obtained higher sexism scores than members of Age Group 1. Differences in birth cohort gender socialization experiences could be responsible for the differences in sexism between the age groups. However, it is always challenging to assess the directional causation. For example, to know if one's familial gender socialization experiences influenced one's gender role attitudes, or if one's gender role

attitudes influenced the way in which one reported his/her familial gender socialization experiences.

### ***Limitations and Future Directions***

It is important to acknowledge study limitations, given the potential for result confounding. One of the most important limitations is sample size. On account of the difficulty in recruiting older-aged individuals for the study, there was a very uneven split between age groups 1 and 2, with almost 3 times as many participants in Age Group 1. Additionally, the entirety of Age Group 1 was composed of university students and 1/3 of Age Group 2 was composed of churchgoers. As a result, it is impossible to generalize the findings to a varied population. To address this limitation, future researchers who examine two or more age groups should include an even number of participants in all groups and always select representative samples.

A second limitation that relates directly to the first is the large amounts of data that were missing, which limited the numbers of participants whose data could be used in analysis. All studies will suffer from missing data, but this can be guarded against in increasing sample sizes.

A third limitation is the retrospective study design. The participants were asked to recall experiences from the distant past. This was especially difficult for individuals in the older age group who had to think back 50-70 years earlier. In addition to simply not being able to remember certain experiences, time-memory bias can be problematic. These problems are in most cases unavoidable if one is interested in studying the early-life socialization experiences of elderly individuals. However, I recommend opting for an interview-structured study method as opposed to a questionnaire. It is easier to remember past events when freely talking about a time period.

A fourth limitation concerns the study's time constraint. The experimenter only had a matter of months in which to carry out a literature review, design the study, assemble groups of participants, and write up the results. In order to properly assess the effect of the lifespan on gender role attitudes, a longitudinal design would need to be employed, in which participants of different age groups are given sexism measures repeatedly over time.

A fifth limitation pertains to the study's measures. Given that the socialization questionnaire was only piloted on two individuals, many potential problems with the questions went unnoticed. Most of the questions required yes-no answers, which were chosen for the sake of time and simplicity, but did not provide the flexibility that a Likert scale would have afforded. Many of the questions were also phrased in too complex a way, such as the question, "Do you feel that your parents embodied traditional gender roles reflective of the times?" In many cases this question was left blank indicating participants' difficulty with it. In addition, some of the questions did not distinguish between multiple possibilities. An example of this is, "Did your parents share housework responsibilities?" The answers available to the participants were: (1) Not at all or (2) To some extent or (3) To a great extent. If the selected answer was anything other than "to a great extent," it was impossible to know who it was that was mainly responsible for housework.

There were also problems with the Swedish Classical and Modern Sexism Scale. The scale was originally written in Swedish, then translated into English by Ekehammer et al., 2000, and then translated back into Swedish again by a different party. The subtle differences in the items resulting from translation could very well have made a difference in how participants understood the statements, and thus how they responded to them. On account of the fact that all statements, to which participants were asked to respond, were related to their beliefs/attitudes, there was potential for some amount of feeling with each item. That is, each item had the potential to arouse emotion in the respondent. This

emotion, which could affect the way one would read each item, may well have disappeared or become altered in the translation. The intended meaning of each statement could then be read as something different and responded to in kind, and this intermediary process is beyond your awareness as the researcher. A number of the resulting statements in English are ambiguous. This was something we tried to remedy in translating the statements back into Swedish, but it is difficult to assess the success of this. An example is question #7, which states, “The school curriculum should be adapted to girls’ needs.” This item was reverse coded, so that to disagree with it meant a higher score (sexist). The problem with it is that participants who had low scores (nonsexist) on most or all other items often had high scores on this item. It runs the risk of being read as a sexist statement that suggests that only girls’ needs should be considered when constructing the school curriculum, as opposed to what I believe to be the intended meaning, which is an acknowledgment that the existing school curriculum is catered to the needs of boys and often excludes girls. The experimenter ran this line of thought by several people, and all agreed that participants might interpret the statement in this way. Many participants, whose sexism scores were otherwise very low, scored highest on this question.

Another example of a possibly ambiguous question is question #4, which states, “I would like to see a woman prime minister in Sweden.” Here again is a question that can be read in the opposite way than the writer of the question intended. Positive answers to this question are supposed to indicate less sexism, however many people felt that gender should not play a part in the decision to elect a prime minister, that the decision should be based solely on the person’s leadership attributes. The majority of the responses to this question were neutral. Neutral answers to such questions considerably increased the overall sexism score in certain cases.

Ideas for future study include an examination of between-group differences in the gender role attitudes of men alone and women alone. The analysis of such differences in the current study was limited on account of sample constraints. Additionally, in order to continue to determine how attitudes develop across the lifespan, additional age groups should be studied. Future research could also include the parents and siblings of the age group members. This way a more accurate picture of the family structure could be obtained.

### ***Conclusion***

The present study supports the notion that early gender socialization familial experiences are influential in determining future gender role attitudes. In particular, the extent to which one has shared housework responsibilities with a cohabiting partner is predictive of the levels of sexism in his/her attitudes toward gender roles. Having a mother who is highly educated and employed is also associated with less sexist attitudes, as is having parents who shared housework. Given the prevalence of sexism and the harm it can cause, further studies are needed to examine the root causes of sexist attitudes, because awareness can lead to eradication.

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## **Appendix A**

## Socialization Questionnaire

**Följande frågor behandlar familjen och den miljö du växte upp i. Fyll i dina svar i rutorna genom att markera med ett kryss.**

**1. Vem bodde du med under majoriteten av din uppväxt (0 till 17 år)?**

Båda föräldrarna    endast mor    endast far    mor + styvfar  
 far + styvmor    annat (t ex fosterhem) \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Vilken utbildningsnivå har/hade din far/fadersfigur?**

Grundskola    Gymnasium    Folkhögskola    Högskola/Universitet

**3. Vilken utbildningsnivå har/hade din mor/modersfigur?**

Grundskola    Gymnasium    Folkhögskola    Högskola/Universitet

**4. Vilket yrke hade din far/fadersfigur när du var mellan 0 och 17 år gammal?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Arbetade din far/fadersfigur utanför hemmet under hela den tiden då du var mellan 0 och 17 år gammal?**

Ja    Nej

**Om inte, vänligen specificera varför (arbetslös, pappaledig, eller annat) och i hur många år.**

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ år

**6. Hur många timmar per vecka arbetade din far/fadersfigur när du var mellan 0 och 17 år gammal?**

Heltid    Deltid

**7. Vilket yrke hade din mor/modersfigur när du var mellan 0 och 17 år gammal?**

---

**8. Arbetade din mor/modersfigur utanför hemmet under hela den tiden då du var mellan 0 och 17 år gammal?**

Ja                      Nej

**Om inte, vänligen specificera varför (arbetslös, mammaledig, eller annat) och i hur många år?**

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ år

**9. Hur många timmar per vecka arbetade din mor/modersfigur när du var mellan 0 och 17 år gammal?**

Heltid    Deltid

**10. Föddes dina föräldrar i Sverige?**

Ja                      Nej

**Om inte, i vilket land föddes de?** \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Vem bestämde mest i hemmet under din uppväxt?**

Mor/modersfigur    far/fadersfigur    lika mycket var  
annat (var god specificera)

**12. Vem hade huvudsakligen hand om familjens finanser under din uppväxt?**

Mor/modersfigur    far/fadersfigur    lika mycket var  
annat (var god specificera) \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Delade dina föräldrar på disk-, tvätt- och städningssysslor?**

Inte alls    till viss utsträckning    till stor utsträckning

**14. Tyckte din mor/modersfigur att det var viktigt att du uppträdde i enlighet med vad som förväntades av någon med ditt kön?**

Ja                      Nej



**15. Tyckte din far/fadersfigur att det var viktigt att du uppträdde i enlighet med vad som förväntades av någon med ditt kön?**

Ja Nej

**16. Känner du att dina föräldrar uppmuntrade dig att eftersträva vissa saker, och motarbetade dig i strävan efter andra, på grund av ditt kön?**

Ja Nej

**17. Om du har eller har haft syskon: hur många, är/var de äldre eller yngre än du, vilket kön?**

---

**18. Känner du att du behandlades annorlunda av någon av dina föräldrar, i jämförelse med hur dina syskon av motsatt kön behandlades, på grund av ditt kön?**

Ja Nej

**Om så är fallet, var god förklara hur?**

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**19. Var du som tonåring tvungen att utföra hushållssysslor?**

Ja Nej

**Om så är fallet, vad bestod dessa sysslor av; inomhussysslor (matlagning, städning) eller utomhussysslor (gräsklippning, biltvättning)?**

inomhussysslor utomhussysslor

**20. Tycker du att dina föräldrar uppförde sig på det sätt som förväntades av någon med deras respektive kön, när du var mellan 0 och 17 år gammal?**

Ja Nej

**21. I ditt livs hittills viktigaste kärleksförhållande, till vilken utsträckning delar/delade du hushållssysslor med din partner?**

Inte alls till viss utsträckning

till stor utsträckning

## **Appendix B**

### **Swedish Classical and Modern Sexism Scales**

**INSTRUKTIONER: Indikera i vilken utsträckning följande påståenden stämmer in på dig med hjälp av följande skala:**

- Tar helt avstånd ifrån
- Tar delvis avstånd ifrån
- Neutral
- Instämmer delvis
- Instämmer helt

	Tar helt avstånd ifrån	Tar delvis avstånd ifrån	Neutral	Instämmer delvis	Instämmer helt
1. Jag föredrar manliga chefer framför kvinnliga.					
2. En mans arbete är viktigare än en kvinnas.					
3. Kvinnor är i allmänhet inte särskilt begåvade.					
4. Jag skulle vilja att en kvinna blev statsminister i Sverige.					
5. Kvinnor är bra på att föra logiska resonemang.					
6. Kvinnor är bättre lämpade att ta hand om barn och gamla.					
7. Kvinnor är i allmänhet goda bilförare.					
8. Diskriminering av kvinnor är inte längre ett problem i Sverige.					
	Tar helt avstånd ifrån	Tar delvis avstånd ifrån	Neutral	Instämmer delvis	Instämmer helt

9. Nedsättande framställning av kvinnor i reklam är ovanlig.					
10. Samhället behandlar män och kvinnor på samma sätt.					
11. Regeringen lägger för mycket vikt på kvinnofrågor.					
12. Kvinnorörelsen fyller ingen funktion, och borde avskaffas.					
13. Det är lätt att förstå kvinnorörelsens ståndpunkter.					
14. Skolans läroplan borde anpassas för flickors behov.					
15. Bättre insatser borde göras för att uppnå jämställdhet (mellan könen) på arbetsplatser.					

